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TO RUEHBW/AMEMBASSY BELGRADE IMMEDIATE 1032
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RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI IMMEDIATE 1545
INFO DARFUR COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 129518

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: BG KPKO LY MARR VI

SUBJECT: DEMARCHE: REQUEST TO THE GOVERNMENTS OF BANGLADESH, LIBYA, AND SERBIA FOR CONTRIBUTION OF HELICOPTERS TO THE UN/AU MISSION IN DARFUR (UNAMID)

SUMMARY

¶1. Summary. This is an action request. Please see paragraph ¶7. Department requests the assistance of Embassies Belgrade, Dhaka, and Tripoli in obtaining a commitment from their host governments to provide helicopters to the AU/UN Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). The mission is looking for up to 18 medium transport utility helicopters, with a goal of 6 helicopters per sector and operating crews for deployment to UNAMID at the earliest possible time. The helicopters would be utilized for mission critical activities in Darfur, and permit UNAMID to improve operational capability in fulfilling its mandate. End Summary.

OBJECTIVES

¶2. Department instructs Embassies Belgrade, Dhaka, and Tripoli to pursue the following objectives:

--Impress upon the host governments there is a critical need for 18 medium utility helicopters and crews for deployment to UNAMID, without which the mission cannot meet its operational goals and objectives. The requirement is for military elements to ideally consist of six operational, rotary wing aircraft with the capability to deploy anywhere within Darfur, with each aircraft providing up to 40 flying hours per month. The unit must be self-sufficient in all categories, except fuel, for the first 90 days of deployment.

The aviation unit must deploy with support and maintenance elements. UN Force Generation Services can provide additional details on unit requirements;

--Persuade the host governments to identify and donate to UNAMID UN-certifiable medium transport helicopters on a UN-reimbursable basis, or determine if there is any interest by the respective governments in providing these assets;

--Encourage officials of the host government's Foreign Ministry and Ministry of Defense, as appropriate, to initiate discussions as soon as possible with officials within the United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and Department of Field Support to commence negotiations leading to the deployment of the helicopters and operating crews.

REPORTING DEADLINE

¶3. Embassy should report results of efforts by cable to Erin Whitney, IO/PSC by January 5, 2010.

BACKGROUND

¶4. Since inception, UNAMID has unsuccessfully sought to acquire utility helicopters for the mission. The concept of operations calls for 18 medium transport helicopters to perform essential mission functions. Despite the best efforts of DPKO and the international community, UNAMID has been unable to obtain the necessary helicopters. The operating conditions in Darfur are some of the harshest for UN peacekeepers, with poor roads, poor airfields, and a brutal climate. Air transportation, particularly during the rainy season when all movement is severely curtailed, is the only viable mode of transportation.

¶5. The concept of operations calls for each UNAMID sector to have one military helicopter operating 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, although the Government of Sudan has not yet granted clearance for night flights. A major use for the helicopters would be for medical and casualty evacuations. Given the operating conditions in Darfur for UNAMID troops, the large internally displaced population in camps, and their fragile health, welfare, and security conditions, it is essential to have reliable medical transport capabilities whenever needed. The helicopters will also be used to enhance the safety and security of UNAMID troops, including for troop transport and re-supply, to conduct patrols and search and rescue operations, and to investigate and monitor reports and incidents of conflict within UNAMID's area of operations.

STATE 00129518 002 OF 002

¶6. The ability for UNAMID to fulfill its mandate is dictated by the level of contributions of member states. UNAMID must be capable of rapid mobility over vast distances and difficult terrain. Given the lack of adequate roads, this mobility cannot be achieved without the helicopters. UNAMID's area of operations covers almost 200,000 square miles (an area larger than California. The 18 medium transport utility helicopters are a key enabler to mission success, increasing the mobility and operational impact of the mission.

¶7. Action request. Embassies Belgrade, Dhaka, and Tripoli are requested to approach their respective host governments at the highest appropriate level to obtain a commitment to donate up to 18 medium transport helicopters to UNAMID for service in Darfur. If any host government responds positively to this request, Department requests Embassies to obtain assurances from the host government that the helicopters to be offered to UNAMID are, or will be, UN-certifiable prior to or immediately after delivery to UNAMID. Please inform the Department if a firm commitment is not immediately forthcoming but interest in exploring the option is exhibited by the host government. Department requests the involvement of each Embassy's Defense Attaché's Office in this effort. Department appreciates the assistance from Embassies Dhaka, Tripoli, and Belgrade.

--Please note that follow on assessments may be conducted should the host government identify equipment for use in UNAMID that does not meet UN standards. These assessments will determine if upgrades are possible, or if the US can engage with the UN to accept minimal differences in their stated requirements. Troop Contributing Countries may engage in a dry lease arrangement with the UN in which the UN provides for equipment maintenance.

End action request.

POINT OF CONTACT

¶9. Please contact Erin Whitney at (202) 736-7740 or Thomas Brown at (202) 736-7789 or via e-mail for any necessary further background information or argumentation to meet our objectives.

¶10. Tripoli minimize considered.

CLINTON